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ATTENTION: POLICY AND SERVICES COMMITTEE
FROM: CITY MANAGER **DEPARTMENT:** City Manager's Office
DATE: JUNE 22, 2010 **CMR:** 289:10
SUBJECT: Review and Discussion of Social Media Use Policy

Staff is asking for review from the Policy and Services Committee on the City's proposed Social Media Use Policy and Twitter, Facebook and Video Standards.

As this is an internal policy typically approved by the City Manager, the Council does not need to formally take action on it. However, we are interested in soliciting feedback from the Policy and Services Committee members on the policy as well as on ideas for utilizing social media resources.

BACKGROUND

Web-based social media outlets and their ability to allow individuals to form social networks are quickly becoming a predominant venue for communication and collaboration across personal and business arenas.

“Social media” refers to the various applications for discussion and information-sharing, including social networking sites, blogs, video-sharing sites, podcasts, wikis, message boards, and online forums. Examples include Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Social networking is the practice of expanding the number of an individual's or organization's contacts by making connections through these web-based social media applications.

Several City departments, such as the Park Rangers, Art Center, Animal Services and Library Services, have already taken the initiative to begin to use social media sites to communicate and interact with the public. It is important at this point, however, that a City-wide policy be developed to coordinate these efforts and ensure consistent messaging and usage.

DISCUSSION

The City recognizes that to fully facilitate civic engagement in our community, there must be greater access to information and the ability to share and discuss it in a variety of venues. Throughout the organization, staff is engaged in communications efforts to accomplish this. The use of social media will be an important tool in moving towards a more informed and engaged community. The use of social media will not take the place of pre-existing communication efforts. It is simply one more tool for the City to utilize in its communications with our citizens. Staff has been working to develop a policy for the

use of social media tools to ensure that these tools are used in an appropriate manner and to ensure consistent and appropriate branding and messaging across the City organization.

The City has completed a thorough review of existing local government and public agency social media initiatives and policies as part of the development of the attached policy. In addition, staff in departments already using social media were consulted. This policy, as with any policy, cannot be exhaustive, but is rather meant to be an illustrative guide to enable many more individuals in the organization to use social media to communicate with the public.

Of the variety of social media applications available, the City has initially elected to utilize Facebook, Twitter and video streaming applications. This decision is based upon the extensive number of individuals utilizing these applications, the ease of use of the applications, the capability of such applications to integrate with pre-existing communication channels used by the City and the resources currently available to support those mediums.

As the City's experience with the use of social media grows, so too will the ways in which it is used. It will be imperative that the City's staff remain flexible and responsive to this dynamic and exciting new forum for communication and social interaction. The City will be open to considering the use of additional social media channels after evaluating the experiences with this first phase of tools.

RESOURCE IMPACT

The administrative impact of this policy will vary by department and will be assumed by designated department staff.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This report is consistent with current Council policy direction.

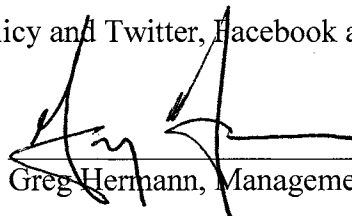
ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The Social Media Use Policy does not constitute a project, requiring environmental review, under the California Environmental Quality Act.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Social Media Use Policy and Twitter, Facebook and Video Standards

PREPARED BY:



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CITY MANAGER APPROVAL:



James Keene, City Manager

SOCIAL MEDIA USE POLICY, STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES

POLICY STATEMENT

Purpose

To address the fast-changing landscape of the Internet and the way residents and businesses communicate and obtain information about the City of Palo Alto online, the City of Palo Alto's (the "City") departments may consider using social media tools to reach a broader audience. The City encourages the use of social media to further the goals of the City and the missions of its departments, where appropriate.

The City has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is "announced" or "spoken" on behalf of the City on social media sites. This policy establishes internal procedures for the use of social media.

What is "social media"? "Social media" and "Web 2.0" are terms used interchangeably to refer to activities that integrate technology, social interaction and content creation. This media allows people to generate, organize, share, edit and comment on web content by means of RSS and other web feeds, blogs, mashups, widgets, wikis, podcasts and photo- and video-sharing, to name a few.

General

- All of the City's social media sites that are posted by departments and offices will be subject to approval by the Communications Manager or designee.
- The City's website (<http://www.cityofpaloalto.org>) will remain the City's primary and predominant internet presence.
- The most appropriate uses of social media tools are as informational channels to increase the City's ability to broadcast its messages to the widest possible audience.
 - o Social media will not be the primary tool used for disseminating emergency information. The CANS system will remain the primary source of that information. Emergency information may be released on social media sites, but not before release on the CANS or other emergency information systems.
- Wherever possible, content posted to the City's social media sites will also be made available on the City's website.
- Wherever possible, content posted to the City's social media sites must contain hyperlinks directing users back to the City's official website for in-depth information, forms, documents or online services necessary to conduct business with the City of Palo Alto.

- As is the case for the City's website, the department's director or designee will be responsible for the content and upkeep (including maintenance and monitoring) of any social media site that department may create.
- Wherever possible, the City's social media sites shall comply with all appropriate City of Palo Alto policies and procedures, including but not limited to:
 - o 1-08; 1-17; 1-19; 1-24; 1-30; 1-35; 1-40; and 1-52.
 - o Any exceptions will be approved by the IT Division (CIO or designee) and/or the City Manager's Office and the Communication Manager dependent on the policy.
- The City's social media sites shall comply with the City's conflict of interest code and applicable ethics rules and policies.
- The City's social media sites are subject to the California Public Records Act and Proposition 59, amending Article 1, Section 3 of the California Constitution. Any content maintained in a social media format that is related to City business, including a list of subscribers and posted communication (with certain exceptions), is a public record. The Department maintaining the site is responsible for responding completely and accurately to any public records request for public records on social media; provided, however, such requests shall be handled in collaboration with the City Attorney's Office. Content related to City business shall be maintained in an accessible format and so that it can be produced in response to a request (see the City's Twitter, Facebook and Video Posting standards). Wherever possible, such sites shall clearly indicate that any articles and any other content posted or submitted for posting may be or are subject to public disclosure upon request. Users shall be notified that public disclosure requests must be directed to the relevant department's director or designee.
- California law and relevant City records retention schedules apply to social media formats and social media content. Unless otherwise addressed in a specific social media standards document, the department maintaining a site shall preserve records required to be maintained pursuant to a relevant records retention schedule for the required retention period on a City server in a format that preserves the integrity of the original record and is easily accessible. Appropriate retention formats for specific social media tools are detailed in the City's Twitter, Facebook and Video Posting standards.
- Users and visitors to the City's social media sites shall be notified that the intended purpose of the site is to serve as a means of communication between City departments and members of the public. The City's social media site articles and comments containing any of the following forms of content shall not be allowed and shall be removed as soon as possible:
 - o Profane language or content
 - o Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation

- Sexual content or links to sexual content
- Solicitations of commerce
- Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity
- Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems
- Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party

Users shall be informed by posting to the City's social media sites that the City disclaims any and all responsibility and liability for any materials that the City deems inappropriate for posting, which cannot be removed in an expeditious and otherwise timely manner.

- These guidelines must be displayed to users or made available by hyperlink. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained, including the time, date and identity of the poster when available (see the City's Twitter, Facebook and Video Posting standards), in accordance with the City's policy on the retention of such information.
- The City reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this policy or any applicable law.
- The City will approach the use of social media tools as consistently as possible, enterprise wide.
- All new social media tools proposed for City use will be approved by the IT Division (CIO or designee) and the City Manager's Office.

PROCEDURES

Administration of the City's Social Media Sites

- The IT Division will maintain a list of social media tools which are approved for use by City departments and staff.
- The IT Division will maintain a list of the City's social media sites, including login and password information. The department's director or designee will inform the IT Division of any new social media sites or administrative changes to existing sites.
- The City must be able to immediately edit or remove content from social media sites.
- For each social media tool approved for use by the City the following documentation will be developed and adopted:
 - Operational and use guidelines
 - Standards and processes for managing accounts on social media sites
 - City and departmental branding standards
 - Enterprise-wide design standards
 - Standards for the administration of social media sites
 - Social Media Standards

The following social media tools have been approved by the City and standards have been developed for their use:

Twitter - Twitter Standard
Facebook - Facebook Standard
Video - Video Posting Standard

The use of other sites must be approved by the IT Division and the Communications Manager or designee.

TWITTER STANDARD

Purpose

Twitter is a micro-blogging tool that allows account holders to tweet up to 140 characters of information to followers. By procuring and maintaining Twitter accounts, City departments will communicate information directly to their Twitter followers, alerting them to news and directing them to the City's website for more information. These standards should be used in conjunction with the City's Social Media Use Policy, Standards and Procedures.

Content

- A department's director or designee shall hold and maintain that department's Twitter account.
- Each department will have only one Twitter account, unless otherwise approved by the Communication Manager. Account information, including usernames and passwords, shall be registered with the IT Division.
- A department's Twitter biography and/or background information will include a link to City's website where the following disclaimer information will be posted:
 - o "(Insert department) is a department (or an office) of the City of Palo Alto, www.cityofpaloalto.org. This site is intended to serve as a mechanism for communication between the public and [department/office] on the listed topics and as a forum to further the department's mission. Any direct tweets to this page and its list of followers may be considered a public record which is subject to disclosure pursuant to the California Public Records Act. Public information requests must be directed to the Communications Manager."
- Twitter usernames shall begin with "Palo Alto" (PaloAltoPD, PaloAltoFire and PaloAltoMgr). In cases where the username consists of too many characters, begin with "PA."
- The main image shall be the Department logo or an appropriate photo. It may also be the City's logo which will be provided by the Communications Manager

- or designee. If the City logo is not used as the main image it should be in the background section.
- Twitter accounts shall serve three primary purposes:
 - o Disseminate immediate interesting or important information to residents of which a news item on the City's website is not necessary or possible
 - o Promote City-sponsored meetings, events, programs and facilities
 - o Refer followers to a news item or content hosted at the City's website and the department's Facebook page
 - Information posted on Twitter shall conform to the existing protocols the City and the department that is posting the information. Tweets shall be relevant, timely and informative.
 - Twitter content, as much as possible, shall mirror information presented on the City's website and other existing information-dissemination mechanisms. The department's director or designee shall ensure that information is posted correctly the first time.
 - Departments will use proper grammar and standard AP style, and will avoid the use of jargon and abbreviations. Twitter is more casual than most other communication tools, but communications must still best represent the City at all times.
 - The department's director or designee shall be responsive to those constituents who communicate via Twitter's @reply or direct message functions. Communication with followers will be timely and consistent with existing protocols.

Archive

- The department's director or designee will maintain an electronic record or printout of any information necessary to retain for the purposes of public records retention in accordance with applicable City policy regarding retention of such information that is not available from the application.

FACEBOOK STANDARD

Purpose

Facebook is a social networking site that continues to grow in popularity and functionality. Businesses and government agencies have joined individuals in using Facebook to promote activities, programs, projects and events. This standard is designed for City departments looking to drive traffic to department websites and to inform more people about City activities. These standards should be used in conjunction with the Social Media Use policy and video posting policy. As Facebook changes, these standards may be updated as needed.

Establishing a Page

Whenever a department determines it has a business need for a Facebook account, it will submit a request to the Communications Manager or designee. Once approved, the IT Division will work with the department to create a basic page for the department. Applications are not to be added to the City's Facebook site without the express written approval of the IT Division. The department's director or designee will register the page with a City email address. Personal Facebook profiles should not be used to administrate City pages unless approved by the Communications Manager or designee.

Type of "Pages"

- The City will create "pages" in Facebook (not "groups"). Facebook "pages" offer distinct advantages including greater visibility, customization and measurability.

Format

- For 'type' description, choose "government."
- The main image shall be the Department logo or an appropriate photo. It may also be the City's logo and the City logo must be one of the profile pictures.
- Departments will include a mission statement or appropriate text in the introduction box on the Wall Page.
- Using the FBML static page application, a boilerplate section should contain a department/program description and the following:
 - o "(Insert department) is a department (or an office) of the City of Palo Alto, www.cityofpaloalto.org. This site is intended to serve as a mechanism for communication between the public and [department/office] on the listed topics and as a forum to further the department's mission. Any comment submitted to this page and its list of fans may be considered a public record which is subject to disclosure pursuant to the California Public Records Act. Public information requests must be directed to the Communications Manager."
- If comments are turned on, the FBML page shall also include a Comment Policy Box with the following disclaimer:
 - o "Comments posted to this page will be monitored and inappropriate content will be removed as soon as possible. Under the City of Palo Alto Social Media Use Policy, Standards and Procedures, the City reserves the right to remove inappropriate content, including, but not limited to, those items that have obscene language or sexual content, threaten or defame any person or organization, violate the legal ownership interest of another party, promote illegal activity and promote commercial services or products."
- The page shall be linked to the City's Facebook page.
- A link to www.cityofpaloalto.org will be included on the Info page.
- City department and project pages should be fans of other City Facebook pages.

- The page name must be descriptive of the department. Each department will choose carefully with due consideration given to abbreviations, slang iterations, and proper grammatical usage.
 - o The Communications Manager or designee will approve proposed names.

Page Administrators

- A successful page requires consistent attention. The department's director will designate one or more staff members as page administrators who will be responsible for monitoring the department's Facebook page. Only designated department staff members will make posts.
- The department's director or designee will be responsible for ensuring content is not stale. The department will designate one or more back-up administrators.

Comments and Discussion Boards

- Comments to the Wall generally will be allowed if the department is able to and does regularly monitor content. If the department is unable to do so, comments to the Wall shall be turned off. Discussion Boards shall be turned off unless approved by the Communications Manager or designee.

Photos and Video

- Page administrators may add photos and videos to the department's Facebook page. The approval of the City Manager and/or the Communications Manager will not be required. If there are postings of photos and/or videos of the public, staff must secure waivers by individuals depicted in the photo and/or video. Photos and/or videos of the City's employees taken during regular office hours may be posted without obtaining waivers. Videos must follow the Video Posting Standard.
- The ability for fans to post photos and videos shall be turned off unless approved by the Communications Manager or designee.

Style

- The City's and the departments' Facebook pages will be based upon a template that includes consistent City branding.
- The IT Division will provide departments and offices with the template.
- Departments will use proper grammar and standard AP style, and will avoid the use of jargon and abbreviations. Facebook is more casual than most other communication tools, but communications must still best represent the City at all times.

Applications

- There are thousands of Facebook applications. Common applications can allow users to stream video and music, post photos, and view and subscribe to RSS feeds. While some may be useful to the page's mission, they can cause clutter and security risks.
- An application must not be used unless it serves an appropriate and a valid business purpose, adds to the user experience, comes from a trusted source, and is approved by the IT Division.
- An application may be removed at any time if the City determines that it is causing a security breach or spreading viruses.

Archive

- The department's director or designee will maintain an electronic record or printout of any information necessary to retain for the purposes of public records retention in accordance with applicable City policy regarding retention of such information that is not available from the application.

A Note about Indemnity

- Most online sites require users to agree to terms of service that include such provisions as:
 1. **Indemnification and Defense.** When a public agency creates an account on a social media site, it typically must agree not to sue the site, nor allow the site to be included in suits against the agency. Many sites also require the account owner to pay the site's legal costs arising from such suits.
 2. **Applicable Law and Venue.** Most terms of service also assert that a certain state's laws (usually California, but not necessarily always) apply to the terms of use and that the state's courts will adjudicate disputes.
- The terms of service represent a binding contract; public agencies should assure that they have taken the steps necessary to bind the agency to such an agreement.
- Some companies are willing to negotiate on the substantive provisions in the terms of use, but they may be hesitant to negotiate separate agreements with dozens of different agencies. For example, the FAQ on the "Facebook and Government" page indicates that "at this time Facebook does not have any special legal agreements for state and local governments."

VIDEO POSTING STANDARD

Purpose

The City will enable access to online video content, as this is the way many residents communicate and obtain information online. Key objectives for video content shall meet one or more of the follow goals: to further the department's mission, provide information about City services, showcase City and community events and explore City issues The City encourages the use of video content to further the goals of the City and the missions of its departments, where appropriate. These standards should be used in conjunction with the City's Social Media Use Policy, Standards and Procedures.

Video Posting Guidelines

- The department's director or designee will be responsible for approving the video content.
- Video quality must be comparable to DVD resolution quality.
- Low quality video will be considered as long as the audio portion is clear and the content is compelling and informative.
- All videos must be posted on the department's website and the department's Facebook page.
- The department must secure a disclaimer from the author or owner or the right to use all of or part of a video if the video was not produced by the department or any other City department.
- Videos streamed from other sources may not be posted to the City's website. Links to external videos are permitted, but it must only be used when content is relevant and necessary approvals are received.

Submitting Videos to Hosting Sites

- Videos may be submitted to hosting sites such as YouTube and Vimeo as well as Facebook on a case-by-case basis under the direction of the department's director or designee.
- Most of these sites limit the video to the lesser of 10 minutes in length or less than 1 GB of data storage.
- Comments posted to these sites must be monitored or the ability to post a comment shall be turned off. Comments must adhere to the guidelines stated in the Social Media Use Policy.

Archive

- Any video posted to a third party's video site must also be posted the department's website for purposes of records retention.